

### Claims

1. A device for operating at least one first and one second discharge lamp (71, 72) having

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a coupling-out device (30) for coupling out a heating current for the incandescent filaments (711, 712, 721, 722) of the discharge lamps (71, 72) from a supply branch of the device, the coupling-out device (30) having a current control device (PTC) for controlling the heating current, and a heating transformer unit ( $L_{hp}$ ,  $L_{hs1}$ ,  $L_{hs2}$ ,  $L_{hs3}$ ), and having

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a first contact device connected to the supply branch, and a second contact device for making contact with the first and second discharge lamp (71, 72), a secondary coil unit ( $L_{hs1}$ ,  $L_{hs2}$ ,  $L_{hs3}$ ) of the heating transformer unit being connected to the first and second contact device for the purpose of supplying the incandescent filaments with heating current.

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2. The device as claimed in claim 1, in which the secondary coil unit ( $L_{hs1}$ ,  $L_{hs2}$ ,  $L_{hs3}$ ) comprises three coils, specifically a first secondary coil ( $L_{hs1}$ ) for supplying a first incandescent filament (711) of the first discharge lamp (71), a second secondary coil ( $L_{hs2}$ ) for supplying a second incandescent filament (712) of the first discharge lamp (71) and a first incandescent filament (721) of the second discharge lamp (72), and a third secondary coil ( $L_{hs3}$ ) for supplying a second incandescent filament (722) of the second discharge lamp (72).

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3. The device as claimed in claim 1, in which the supply branch comprises a resonance capacitor ( $C_{res}$ ) and a resonance inductor ( $L_{res}$ ).

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4. The device as claimed in claim 3, in which the resonance inductor ( $L_{res}$ ) constitutes the primary coil of a coupling-out transformer unit whose secondary coil ( $L_a$ ) drives the coupling-out device.

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5. The device as claimed in claim 3, in which the resonance inductor is bipartite, and a portion ( $L_{res2}$ ) thereof constitutes the primary coil of a coupling-out transformer unit for driving the coupling-out device.

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6. The device as claimed in claim 3, in which the resonance inductor ( $L_{res}$ ) has a tap via which the coupling-out device can be driven.

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7. The device as claimed in claim 1, in which a sequential starting capacitor ( $C_{seq}$ ) is connected in parallel with the first or second contact device.

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8. The device as claimed in one of claims 1, in which the current control device (PTC) comprises a PTC thermistor.

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9. An electronic ballast for operating discharge lamps (71, 72), having a device as claimed in claim 1.

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10. A method for operating at least two discharge lamps (71, 72) that are supplied with power via a supply branch, characterized in that the entire power for preheating incandescent filaments (711, 712, 721, 722) of the discharge lamps (71, 72) is coupled out inductively from the supply branch.